

SUZUKI PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION NEWS

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To facilitate, promote, and educate the public
on the way of teaching and playing the piano taught at the
Talent Education Research Institute in Matsumoto, Japan by Dr. Haruko Kataoka.

Piano Basics Foundation News

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Striving for First Class

By Haruko Kataoka

From the Matsumoto Suzuki Piano Newsletter
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January 11, 2008
Translated by Chisa Aoki and Teri Paradero
Edited by Karen Hagberg
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No matter what one studies, in the beginning we all start at ground zero. There is no knowledge, no ability; we are like blank paper.

Conventional wisdom dictates that we start out being inept, and then we gradually become proficient. Children cannot be expected in the beginning to be skilled at any task. Meanwhile, in time they become advanced and, if they study hard with a good teacher, they can master a skill. This is the conventional way people think. However, it is this very way of thinking where mistakes originate.

At the outset, it is important to determine whether we aim to be first class or third class. For instance, in piano, the performance of Book 1 pieces must be first class, as should the pieces in Book 2. After not studying first class at the outset, we cannot expect to become first class at the advanced level.

The issue at hand is the teacher. The children and parents who come to learn are not experts. They are not able to assess the quality of the lesson they are receiving. By and by, the child becomes advanced. If there should come a time when a child decides that he/she wants to study music and aspires to study at the best music conservatory, it is too late to bring a mediocre education or ability up to the required standard. Discovering at the last minute that his or her piano study had been inferior to the point that it was impossible to matriculate into a good conservatory would be a terrible shock for any student. It is a pitiful situation. The American educator Dr. William Smith Clark said to his students in Japan, "Boys, be ambitious," but I believe that it is the teachers who need always to study what is first class and to strive to teach it.

If only those individuals who received first-class education in the arena of politics, economics, music, etc, were to be in charge of their respective fields I think that our world would be a wonderful place. In order for human beings to learn what is first class, it is necessary for those of us who teach to have the warmth of love, patience and perseverance. This is not something that can be accomplished by the kind of last-minute cramming that Japanese students do in preparation for their college entrance examinations.

A while ago, I remember listening to a news telecast of a debate between a Japanese college professor and an American politician about the problems of politics in Washington. Their conclusion was that Japan has a first-class economy, but third-class politicians. Conversely, the United States has a third-class economy with first-class politicians. They theorized that a third-class economy could be changed into a first-class one, but that it might be impossible to change human beings. This

discussion made me laugh. To change politicians, who are already adults, realistically would be truly improbable.

First-class learning must start from the beginning. Traditional thinking would have us believe that merely learning the notes of a piece and then moving on to the next piece is sufficient education. On the contrary, the teacher must always carefully teach each piece starting with the Twinkles so while taking into consideration the students' present capability, they can perform at their best, highest level. Parents/guardians, we exert much effort toward this goal of nurturing the ability to study at the very highest level. Let us please cooperate together to provide the very best, first-class study for our children.

When Dr. Kataoka spoke to us, she referred to this concept of 'first class' over and over. What are the concrete ways we can strive for first-class education?

Because we study music, we should attend concerts of world-renowned virtuosi. It is also a must to listen daily to recordings of the best pianists. What about arts other than music? For instance, in the visual arts, you can experience calligraphy, painting, ceramics, or a wonderfully made movie. You can also observe the very best in sports like baseball or soccer. Items that we use daily should be of good quality. Meals can be economical, but extra care and effort can be taken in their preparation. There are many areas in life that you can exemplify 'first class.' The concept of 'first class' can apply not only to objects or things. It is relevant also in social interactions where the ability to address or greet people properly is crucial, as is one's training in proper etiquette and manners. We must never forget to teach the ability to aspire to polish one movement to the highest degree.

We, as adults, must keep in mind that we must strive to provide opportunities for our children to experience and to be influenced by what is genuine and real.

6th International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert in Sacramento, CA

The 2009 10-Piano Concert in Sacramento will be held in Davis, California in Jackson Hall at the Mondavi Center for the Arts on Saturday, August 15, at 2:30 p.m. General admission tickets are \$15.

Ten students from Matsumoto will be accompanied by teachers Keiko Ogiwara, Keiko Kawamura, and Keiko Nozawa, who will direct the rehearsals, making this another truly international event.

Additionally, two students from elsewhere in Japan, six from Canada and 34 from around the United States will join students from the Sacramento area to perform in the concert. Teachers bringing students are: Mayumi Takashi (Japan); Chisa Aoki and Elizabeth Sherk (Canada); and Bruce Anderson, Karmalita Bawar, Judy Blase, Jackie Block, Bruce Boiney, Cleo Brimhall, Lisa Cash, Renee Eckis, Karen Hagberg, Mei Ihara, Fumi Kawasaki, Eloise Sanders, Rae Kate Shen, Connie Snyder, Billie Tuttle, and Koko Yee (United States). Several other teachers will come to observe rehearsals and attend the concert. Registration for observing teachers is still open (\$275 registration for entire rehearsal period, \$150 for 3-day pass, or \$75/day). Those who help with the concert will receive a free concert ticket. Deadline to get your name in the program as an observer is July 20.

From August 1-9, rehearsals will be held at Sacramento State College. Rehearsals will be at the Mondavi Center from August 11 until the concert.

Program

1. The Bow
2. Twinkles A and D
3. Lightly Row
4. Go Tell Aunt Rhody
5. Chant Arabe
6. Musette
7. Hummel: Ecossaise
8. Schumann: The Happy Farmer
9. Bach: Minuet 3
10. Mozart: Arietta
11. Beethoven: Sonatina Moderato
12. Clementi: Sonatina, Op. 36 No. 1
Andante
13. Schumann: Wild Rider
14. Clementi: Sonatina, Op. 36 No. 3
Spiritoso
15. Bach: Musette
16. Beethoven: Sonata, Op. 49 No. 2
Allegro, ma non troppo
17. Bach: Two Minuets
18. Bach: Gigue
19. Beethoven: Für Elise
20. Mozart: Sonata, K. 330 Allegretto
21. Mozart: Sonata, K. 331 Rondo
alla turca
22. Chopin: Waltz, Op. 34 No. 3
23. Liszt: Liebestraum
24. Schumann: Novellette, Op. 21 No. 1

We hope to see many of you at this year's concert as we study the teaching of the important pieces in
the
Suzuki repertoire and supplementary repertoire as well.

Kataoka Recordings to Remain Available

Contrary to recent reports, we are told by Mr. David Ellsworth in the Keyboard Customer Support Department of the Alfred Publishing Company, "The rumor you heard regarding discontinuation of the Kataoka recordings of Books 1-3 of the Suzuki Piano Method is false information. We have no plans to discontinue this CD." As always, we encourage all teachers to compare available recordings and choose the very best ones for our students.

Call for Articles

Where are the writers out there? You are invited to share your ideas and thoughts with your colleagues. Let us all know what's on your mind!

Articles may be submitted at any time. There is always a deadline looming. Write about recordings you've discovered, workshops you've attended, teaching experiences, personal revelations: whatever you want to share.

Articles may be emailed to Karen Hagberg kh@hagbergsuzuki.com. All editing will be done with author's approval.

Structuring a Pre-School Suzuki Piano Class: Solutions in My Studio, Part I

By Karen Hagberg

Twenty years ago, I was sitting in Dr. Kataoka's studio in Matsumoto, observing lessons six days a week. On Tuesday afternoons, she taught her youngest beginners. The little children and their mothers would arrive at the studio first to have some social time before Dr. Kataoka arrived. The children and mothers thus became friends.

Lessons were not in a set order. The eager children were usually chosen, and occasionally a reticent child was given a chance to go first. The children were from three to five years old, and there were three, four, or five of them on any given Tuesday afternoon. All families remained until the end of the last lesson. Thus, the lesson of each child became everybody's lesson. Dr. Kataoka often directed remarks to all of the mothers as a group. The children were not expected to be paying direct attention to each others' lessons, but the mothers all watched and listened intently. This was obviously a wonderful way for very young children to begin piano lessons and for their parents to become oriented in the ways of Suzuki Method.

On returning to the United States, I had the best intentions of starting young children in the same way. After all, a basic tenet of Suzuki Method is that children and parents should experience other lessons every week by having their schedules intentionally overlap. Dr. Suzuki would remind us, "One child, one parent, one teacher: bad environment.

" My good intentions never quite came to fruition, however. Parents in my studio insisted on specific lesson times based on family schedules. Rarely was I able to get even two beginners to come regularly at the same time. They might begin together, but soon one of them would require a different lesson time.

So I found myself too often with one student and one parent, giving a solitary lesson to a very young child who wasn't going to learn much without seeing other children doing the same things. The parents of some of the youngest beginners quit in frustration. I began to wait until children were four years old before taking them as students. I typically saw these four-year-olds twice a week for

many months, but still they did not have adequate exposure to other young beginners as much as I tried to make it happen.

The solution for me was to offer a class for beginners at a very low price (about one-fifth my tuition for private lessons). The class is limited to eight students and is scheduled twice a week. I tell parents that they may come to one or both sessions for the same fee (knowing that the ones who come twice a week will be ready for individual lessons that much sooner). I have found that parents somehow find time in their schedules to attend a pre-scheduled class that is not very expensive. They are also willing to bring considerably younger children. I have had students who are barely two years old in the class. Another advantage is that parents are not intensely looking for “progress” the way they would if they were paying for private lessons.

I advertise the class as a way to establish and to recognize readiness for individual lessons. In actuality, it has become my way of orienting parents to the Suzuki Method and to give them the musical skills they need to be good coaches for their children. The students are given the opportunity to experience the environment of lessons with no pressure to participate until they are ready. Because they have paid very little money for the class, parents are able to set aside expectations and allow their children to get involved in piano at their own natural pace. I make it clear that children may enroll in the class over and over before individual lessons begin, until we are all ready. Those in the class are not yet required to have a piano or seating equipment at home, but are told not to try to practice at home until they do have all these things. The only purchases required for the class are the score and recording for Book 1.

When children begin private lessons, they are still required to attend the class at least once a week until they have learned all the right-hands in Book 1.

What Children Learn

There are many skills for both parents and children that are being developed in this class experience. Children learn to bow correctly, alone and together in a group. They learn to sit at the piano with good posture and relaxation and hold a ready position with each finger to the count of 25 (some want to count much higher). They learn their finger numbers. They learn to be quiet and respectful when another child is at the piano. They learn to sing all of the Book 1 pieces in solfège using fixed do. They learn to begin an activity (clapping, playing a Twinkle rhythm, singing a melody, counting while another child is holding a ready position, bowing, playing a single note with others) when the teacher says, “Go.” They learn to find the notes on the keyboard, and to play back patterns that are sung to them. (In other words, they can execute simple musical dictation.) They learn to play a single note and to hold it until the sound disappears. The more advanced students in the class, the ones who have already begun private lessons, learn to accompany group singing. All of them learn what it is like to be in a community with other piano students.

What Parents Learn

Parents learn to read music and to sing the Book 1 pieces in solfège, writing the solfège syllables above the notes in the score. They learn to understand note values, clefs, key signatures, time signatures, repeat signs, and other musical directions that appear in Book 1. The parents begin to understand the important basics of the Suzuki approach that are very different from other methods: parental support, ear training and tone production, body work (posture, relaxation, hand and arm position), proper seating equipment, the importance of listening, the importance of the entire environment of the child. Since there are always more advanced students in the class, both parents and students have frequent contact with children who are able to do the things they are currently

trying to do. Thus, parents have the opportunity to reinforce their understanding of the basics, and students are able to learn from their environment, always trying hard to do what the more advanced students can do.

The skills I teach in this class are the same as skills I teach to all beginners. The class format has proven to be just so much more effective than private lessons for young beginners, and for the first time I have no problem persuading parents to begin before the child's third birthday.

Part 2 will discuss the specific format of the 45-minute class from beginning to end.

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Suzuki-L discussion group:

<http://core.ecu.edu/hist/wilburnk/SuzukiPianoBasics/#Suzuki-L>

Piano Basics Foundation Upcoming Workshops/Events

April 3-4, 2009

Boise, Idaho

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Lori Armstrong

Contact: Deborah Johnson

deborahjohnson5@aol.com

April 10-13, 2009

Singapore

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Linda Nakagawa

Contact: Clare Sie

claresie@yahoo.com.sg

April 23-26, 2009

Atlanta, Georgia

Suzuki Piano Basics Workshop with Bruce Boiney

Contact: Jocelyn McQuire 404-524-5800

wind_song@abraxis.com

June 3-6, 2009

Louisville, Kentucky

University of Louisville Suzuki Piano Institute

Contact: Bruce Boiney 502-241-5921

boiney@suzukipiano.com

July 5-9, 2009

Tacoma, Washington

Suzuki Piano Festival with Bruce Boiney

Contact: Jacki Block 253-759-7213

jblock@ups.edu

July 27-31, 2009

Saint Louis, Missouri

Suzuki Piano Basics Institute

with Cathy Williams Hargrave and Libby Armour

Contact: Patty Eversole 314-837-1881

<http://www.geocities.com/stlsuzukipiano/>

**August, 1-15, 2009
Davis, California
International Suzuki Piano Basics 10-Piano Concert
Mondavi Center for the Arts
Contact Linda Nakagawa 916-422-2952
g.nakagawa@comcast.net**

**The events listed above are for the information of Suzuki Piano Basics
Foundation members and others.
Suzuki Piano Basics Foundation does not endorse, sanction, or sponsor events.**

**To add or change items on this list and on the Suzuki Piano Basics website,
contact
Karen Hagberg, 585-244-0490 kh@hagbersuzuki.com.**

ATTENTION WORKSHOP CLINICIANS

**For the information of our members we want your workshops and institutes to
be listed here and on our web site, and we encourage you to submit information
about these.**

**We need at least three months of lead time to make these listings in a timely
fashion. The only requirement to be listed here is that your event be called a
Suzuki Piano Basics event. Thanks, in advance, for making this as complete a
listing as possible.**

PIANO BASICS FOUNDATION EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS

(Please use enclosed order form)

Compact Discs

Dr. Haruko Kataoka performs Suzuki Piano Repertoire volume 1

Member Price: \$14.00; Non-member \$17.00

Dr. Haruko Kataoka performs Suzuki Piano Repertoire volume 2

Member Price: \$14.00; Non-member: \$17.00

Dr. Haruko Kataoka performs Suzuki Piano Repertoire volume 3

Member Price: \$14.00; Non-member \$17.00

Additional Discography

Seizo Azuma, piano, **Currently out of stock:** Schubert Four Impromptus, Op. 90/ Beethoven Sonata No. 8, Op. 13, c minor, “Pathétique” / Beethoven Sonata No. 26, Op. 81a, Eb major, “Das Lebewohl”

Member Price: \$24.00; Non-Member Price: \$29.00

Seizo Azuma, piano, **NOW AVAILABLE!** La Campanella –F. Liszt “Favorites” La chasse, 4 Valses oubliées, no. 1/ Consolation No. 3/ Au bord d’une source,/ Ballade No. 2/Sposalizio/ La Campanella/ Sonetto 104 del Petrarca/ Ungarische Rhapsodie No. 2/Liebestraume, no. 3

Member Price: \$17.00; Non-Member Price: \$20.00

Mineo Hayashi, cello; Seizo Azuma, piano, Fun Classics, 12 Pieces:The Swan/Après un Rêve/Clair de Lune/Prayer from “Jewish Life”/Song of the Birds/ Paraphrase on a Japanese Folk tune Sakur, Sakura/ Song without Words in D major Op. 109/ Etude, Op. 8 No. 11, Bb minor/ Songs my Mother taught me Op. 55 no. 4/ Elegy Op. 24 / Adagio und Allegro in A-flat major Op. 70/ Polonaise Brillante, Op. 3, C major

Member Price: \$20.00; Non-Member Price: \$25.00

Mineo Hayashi, cello, Six Suites for solo cello, by J. S. Bach

Member Price: \$28.00; Non-Member Price: \$30.00

Videotapes

April, 1996 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert

Member Price: \$100.00; Non-Member Price: \$120.00

August 1999 Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento

Member Price: \$50.00; Non-Member Price: \$65.00

November 2000 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert

Member Price: \$100.00; Non-Member Price: \$120.00

August 2001 Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento

Member Price: \$50.00; Non-Member: \$65.00

April, 2002 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert

Member Price: \$100.00; Non-Member Price: \$120.00

August 2003 Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento

Member Price: \$50.00; Non-Member: \$65.00

November, 2003 Matsumoto 10-Piano Concert (DVD)

Member Price: \$100.00; Non-Member: \$120.00

NEW! Memorial Concert held in Matsumoto, July 28, 2004, featuring Seizo Azuma and other distinguished former students.

Member Price: \$45.00

Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento 2005 (DVD)

Member Price: \$50.00; Non-Member: \$65.00

NEW! Suzuki Piano Basics International 10-Piano Concert, Sacramento 2005 (DVD)

Member Price: \$50.00; Non-Member: \$65.00

Books

Dr. Haruko Kataoka Sensibility and Education, 2nd printing

Member Price: \$12.00; Non-Member: \$14.00

Dr. Shinichi Suzuki Nurtured by Love

Member Price: \$13.00; Non-Member: \$16.00

Dr. Haruko Kataoka Thoughts on the Suzuki Piano School

Member Price: \$6.00; Non-Member: \$8.00

Dr. Haruko Kataoka My Thoughts on Piano Technique

Member Price: \$6.00; Non-Member: \$8.00

Dr. Haruko Kataoka How to teach beginners

Member Price: \$12.00; Non-Member: \$14.00

Full color edition of Memorial Piano Basics Foundation Newsletter

Member Price: \$5.00; Non-Member: \$10.00

NEW! Print of pencil portrait of Kataoka Sensei, 6”h x 4” w,
drawn in Matsumoto in 1992. Drawn and donated by
Huub de Leeuw. (Proceeds to benefit the Memorial Fund.)

Member Price: \$20.00; Non-Member: \$25.00

NEW! 10-Piano Poster: 1999,2001, 2003, 2005

Member Price: \$10.00; Non-Member: \$15.00

NEW! 10-Piano Poster: 2001 Autographed by Dr. Kataoka and Juri Kataoka

Member Price: \$25.00; Non-Member: \$30.00

NEW! 10-Piano Poster: 2003 Autographed by Dr. Kataoka

Member Price: \$25.00; Non-Member: \$30.00

Please send corrections to [Kenneth Wilburn](#), Senior Web Editor

To the [Kataoka Sensei Memorial](#).
To the [Suzuki Piano Basics Home Page](#).

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